

the SOUTH FLORIDA

WATER

Management District

The South Florida Water Management District plays a major role in the overall quality of life for southern Florida residents and businesses. The "District" is a regional water resources agency responsible for balancing and improving:

- flood control
- water supply
- water quality
- natural systems

Created by the Florida Legislature in 1949, the District is the largest of five regional agencies charged with protecting the state's water resources. Unique in the nation, the Districts have boundaries based on hydrological, not political lines. The District:

- includes 16 counties from Orlando to Key West
- covers nearly 18,000 square miles
- serves more than 6 million residents
- employs approximately 1,800 people

World's Largest Water Control System

One of the District's most important responsibilities is the operation of the Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Flood Control Project. This vast network of canals and levees was authorized by Congress in 1948 to protect Florida from deadly floods and droughts. The District operates this project jointly with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Today, the C&SF Project is one of the world's largest public works projects, including:

- Over 1,000 miles of canals
- 700 miles of levees
- Hundreds of gate and water control structures
- Dozens of pump stations

The District's system of canals and pump stations, combined with state-of-the-art technology, drains regional floodwaters during times of abundant rainfall, tropical storms or hurricanes. The network connects to hundreds of smaller local and community drainage districts to effectively manage floodwaters.

It moves water throughout the region for use by cities, farms and natural ecosystems; recharges drinking water supply wells; and is essential to the region's successful development.

District Programs

In addition to providing regional flood protection and water supply, the District has many other important responsibilities:

Long-Term Water Supply Planning. The District is developing regional water supply plans for its 16-county service area to ensure a safe, adequate supply of fresh water as the population grows. These 20-year plans outline ways to meet future demands.

Issuing Permits to Safeguard Water Resources. One of the District's most powerful tools to protect water resources is its permitting authority. The District requires permits for all large water withdrawals – for example, from agriculture or an urban utility – and requires new developments to properly manage on-site stormwater before it is discharged.

Natural Resource Restoration. Perhaps our most well-known responsibility is the restoration of the greater Everglades ecosystem, encompassing the Kissimmee River, Lake Okeechobee, the Everglades and related coastal estuaries. The Comprehensive

Everglades Restoration Plan component alone is considered the world's largest ecosystem restoration project. A joint state/federal effort, it will take more than 30 years to complete and cost \$7.8 billion. Other projects include destroying millions of melaleuca trees and other exotic plants invading the Everglades, revitalizing native habitats on public lands, and preserving and restoring valuable wetlands.

Water Conservation. Saving water is the most economical and sensible way to stretch our valuable freshwater resources. The District conducts water conservation programs to encourage people to save water year-round; requires many large water users to implement innovative programs such as reclaimed water and reverse osmosis; and imposes water-use restrictions during severe shortages.

How We Operate

A nine-member board appointed to four-year terms by the governor determines policy for the District. The Governing Board meets monthly at District headquarters in West Palm Beach, and meetings are open to the public. Several times a year, board meetings are held in other southern Florida cities. A multi-disciplined staff of engineers, scientists, planners, computer specialists, field workers and other professional, technical and administrative employees carry out the District's diverse missions.

